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Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to introduce Kyoto University's research and education activities in Ethiopia. The focus is on South Omo Zone, where model sites for the MNGD project are selected. We have been conducting research, education and development activities in South Omo Zone since 1998.

Thanks to the pioneer researchers and the local people who accepted us to their communities, many of us could continue our research related activities across Ethiopia. Notably, a considerable number of scholars from Kyoto University have conducted studies in the South Omo Zone, close to the border of South Sudan and Kenya (Figure 1 in Chapter 1).

Kyoto University Research Activities in Ethiopia, 1960s–1970s

In 1967, Prof. Sadao Sakamoto, an expert in plant genetics and crop evolution, was the first Kyoto University scholar to visit Ethiopia. He researched the diversity of cereal crops, especially crops of Ethiopian origin. During his extensive survey for crop varieties, he visited many places—from Arba Minch in the south to Asmara in the north. In 1972, the report of his survey was published in English (Sakamoto & Fukui, 1972). The photos that were taken during his visit are available on the Kyoto University website (in Japanese, https://app.cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp//sakamoto/photogrid.html).

In the 1970s, primatological research on baboons was started by Prof. Masao Kawai and his team. They conducted animal ethological research mainly in Simien National Park (Kawai, 1976). The work of the research team continued up until 2000s.(1)

Kyoto University Research Activities in South Omo, 1970s–Present

Since the 1970s, the research activities in South Omo Zone have been expanding in terms of the subjects of studies and geographical areas. For descriptive purposes, we classify our research activities in South Omo conducted in two ecological zones; highland and lowland. The eminent researches in the lowland of South Omo Zone were those of anthropological studies on pastoralist communities done by the late Prof. Katsuyoshi Fukui in the 1970s (Fukui, 1979; Fukui & Markakis, 1994). In those days, several western anthropologists were also engaged in the study of pastoral communities in the area. Their academic contributions were compiled in the book titled as "*The Warfare among the East African Herders*," edited by Fukui & Turton (1979).

Research activities conducted in the highland area of South Omo Zone starting in the 1980s were led by Shigeta who was the first Japanese scholar to perform fieldwork on the unique agricultural practices, namely, local knowledge of ensete cultivation in the South Omo Zone (Shigeta, 1990; 1996; Brandt et al., 1997).[(2)]

Since 1998, Shigeta, his graduate students and research fellows have intensified their activities in research and education in South Omo Zone. Over 200 scholars and students of Kyoto University so far visited the highland area in South Omo Zone for several occasions. In 2003, we organized the first fieldwork training program for graduate students with the help of Addis Ababa University in South Omo Zone. Since then, we regularly host the field schools and on-site campus workshops in the area. Through all these experience, each student discovers how to proceed with their fieldwork at their respective research sites.

From 2004 to 2020, eleven Master theses and eight Ph.D. theses based on the researches in South Omo Zone were submitted to Kyoto University in the domain of African Area Studies (Table 1). These theses are more focused on contemporary issues such as the community-based wildlife conservation and management (Nishizaki, 2015), the community-based technology (Kaneko, 2012), the conflicts and peace management in interethnic relationships (Sagawa, 2010), the participatory 3-dimensional mapping modeling (Hisada, 2014), the influence of modern school education to local communities (Arii, 2018), and the care practices for community elders (Noguchi, 2013).[(3)]

Table 1. The List of Kyoto University Ph.D. Thesis (Area Studies) in South Omo

Year	Name	Title
2020	Azeb Girmai	Cultural Tourism as Creating Opportunities for Livelihood Diversification in Ethiopia
2015	ARII, Haruka	Life Stories of Women in Rural Ethiopia: Their Acceptance and Interpretation of School Education
2015	NOGUCHI, Mariko	Life and Social Relationships of the Elderly in African Agricultural Communities: A Case Study of the Aari in Southwestern Ethiopia
2014	Samuel Tafeara	Re-harmonizing the Changes in Livestock Mobility, Land Use and Sedentarization in Hamar, Southwestern Ethiopia
2011	HISADA, Shinichiro	Participatory Area Studies Utilizing Participatory 3-Dimensional Modeling in Ethiopian Agrarian Village
2008	SAGAWA, Toru	Dynamics of War and Peace in East African Pastoral Societies: Inter-Ethnic Relationships between Dassanach and Their Neighboring Peoples
2005	KANEKO, Morie	Contextualizing the Process of Pottery Making: Learning, Praxis, and Creativities of Community-based Technology by Woman Craft Workers among the Ari, Southwestern Ethiopia
2004	NISHIZAKI, Nobuko	Formation of Community Conservation for Wildlife Management in Ethiopia

(Source: Modified the list of Ph.D. thesis on the website of Division of African Area Studies, https://jambo.africa.kyoto-u.ac.jp/africa_division/ronbun/)

Collaboration among Japanese and Ethiopian Scholars and Locals in South Omo Zone: Engaged Area Studies

While students were engaged in field training and research in the South Omo Zone, Shigeta, Prof. Gebre and local officials started some development practices. In 1989, they established a scholarship program to enroll the top five students from the primary school in the remote area of South Omo to higher school education. Since 1989, 48 students have been awarded the scholarship, and some students have received partial support for university education from enrollment through graduation. This scholarship program had a happy ending: a local nongovernmental organization (NGO) called South Omo Hope Association (SOHA) was granted a grassroots assistance fund from the Japan Embassy in Ethiopia to build a dormitory in Jinka, the zonal capital, for Jinka high school students coming from the distant area of South Omo.

In 2008, Shigeta established the South Omo People's Ensete Research Center (SOPERC) by collaborating with local officials in South Omo Zone (Figure 1). The initial activities of the SOPERC were funded by the MITSUI & Co. Environmental fund for three years. According to the research findings at SOPERC, the number of ensete landraces has gradually decreased in the area because of several factors related to social change. Even some of the wild ensete population in the sacred place for rituals were cleared. In order to maintain the local diversity of ensete crop populations, SOPERC collected over 60 varieties and at least 500 individual ensete plants from farmers. Local farmers voluntarily donated their varieties of ensete to SOPERC. Related to this project, in 2009, Japan Embassy granted a grass-roots fund for the construction of farmers training center at Metsar village and the bridge over Sala river, and the maintenance of dirt roads to promote the distribution network of agricultural products in this area of South Omo Zone.

South Omo Zone is rich in its cultural and natural diversities. In the early 1990s, the South Omo Research Center (SORC)/Museum was built through the

Figure 1. South Omo People's Ensete Research Center (SOPERC)

collaboration of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa University and scholars from abroad mainly supported by the German Embassy. Subsequently, we built a public library and researchers offices in the SORC compound with the assistance of cultural grassroots grants from the Japan Embassy.

In 2018, long-awaited Jinka University (JKU) was finally funded in South Omo. As a founder president of JKU, and also a longstanding collaborative research partners of Kyoto University researchers, Prof. Gebre has our complete trust in pursuit of our joint research project such as MNGD project.

Acknowledgements

Our research and education activities in South Omo Zone were guided, assisted, and promoted by the generous understandings and collaborations of several parties. We cannot mention all the individual names here, but will highlight a few agents: we would like to thank the local people and officials of South Omo Zone, members of Addis Ababa University, and Japan Embassy.

Notes

(1) Genetic Research on baboons (Shotake et al., 1977). A study that analyzed and examined baboons and their groups from ethological and sociological perspectives (Sugawara, 1979).

(2) Genetic analysis of ensete throughout Ethiopia by using the case of South Omo (Endashaw & Shigeta, 2011) and a study of ensete cultivation from a nutritional analysis and sociocultural perspective (Tadessa & Shigeta, 2016) and so forth. Shigeta conducts joint research with Ethiopian researchers, and the research outcomes have been published.

(3) There are three Pre-PhD thesis based on the research in South Omo. Changes in Children's Communal Labor Activity in the Ari Area in Southwestern Ethiopia: Effects of School Education and Protestant Christianity (Suzuki, 2004); Potential of Homegardens: Agriculture Based on Root Crops in the Highlands of Southwestern Ethiopia (Miyata, 2007); Women's Housewares

and Their Usage in an Agricultural Community of Africa: Focusing on the Kitchenware of Ari People in Southwestern Ethiopia (Minami, 2011).

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